

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 8161

E.O. 11652: GDS

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SUBJECT: AVALANCHE OF FORCED RETIREMENTS

REF: (A) LAGOS 7795 (B) LAGOS 8028 AND 8036

SUMMARY: POST-COUP SHAKEUP IN NIGERIA CONTINUES. ALTHOUGH NO SERIOUS CORRUPTION INVESTIGATIONS YET UNDERWAY, FORCED RETIREMENTS SWELLING TO AVALANCHE PROPORTIONS. LATEST WAVE INCLUDES CHIEF JUSTICE OF FEDERATION, DR. TASLIM O. ELIAS AND 94 SENIOR POLICE OFFICERS. ANXIETY INCREASING AMONG THOSE STILL IN OFFICE. DRAIN OF EXPERTISE FROM CIVIL SERVICE COULD HAMPER GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS. DISGRUNTLED EX-OFFICIALS, IF THEIR NUMBERS CONTINUE GROW, COULD BECOME TROUBLESOME TO NEW REGIME. END SUMMARY.

1. TYPICAL POST-COUP RUMBLINGS OF INVESTIGATION AND RECRIMINATION CONTINUE, WITH PRESS AND STUDENTS DEMANDING CONFISCATION EX-OFFICIALS

ILL-GOTTEN ASSIETS, PURGE OF FEDERAL AND STATE BUREAUCRACIES. TREASURIES OF LAGOS CITY COUNCIL, BLACK ARTS FESTIVAL AND EAST CENTRAL STATE ARE PURPORTEDLY EMPTY AND NEW LEADERS INDICATE INVESTIGATIONS ARE IN ORDER. THUS FAR, HOWEVER, MOST
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SWEEPING INVESTIGATORY EFFORT IS REQUIREMENT THAT FORMER

GOVERNORS, CIVIL COMMISSIONERS, SENIOR POLICE OFFICERS AND SOME RECENTLY RETIRED MILITARY OFFICERS DECLARE THEIR ASSETS.

2. CLEANING OUT OF STATE BUREAUCRACIES (REFTEL A) CONTINUES-- ALL STATE COMMISSIONERS HAVING ALREADY BEEN DISMISSED-- AND MORE FRECED RETIREMENTS ANNOUNCED EVERY DAY. LAGOS STATE SECRETARY TO MILITARY GOVERNOR F. C. O. COKER SENT INTO RETIREMENT AUGUST 18 AND KWARA SMG J. A. ADERIBIGBE AUGUST 19; THREE BENUE PLATEAU PERMANENT SECRETARIES SENT ON COMPULSORY LEAVE. STATE STATUTORY BOARDS AND CORPORATIONS (MAEKETING BOARDS, WATER BOARDS, BROADCASTING AND PUBLISHING CORPORATIONS, HOTEL CORPORATIONS, ETC.) IN MOST STATES RELIEVED OF THIER OFFICERS AND IN SOME CASES DISSOLVED. ALL LOCAL COUNCILS IN LAGOS STATE DISSOLVED INCLUDING LAGOS CITY COUNCIL (THESE HAD JUST UNDERGONE REORGANIZATION IN JUNE). NEW EAST CENTRAL STATE GOVERNOR COL. ANTHONY OCHEFU, REVEALING THAT HIS TREASURY IS "COMPLETELY EMPTY," LEAVES LITTLE DOUBT THAT ECS CIVIL SERVICE WILL BE PURGED.

3. SENIOR ARMED FORCES OFFICERS FORCED TO RETIRE (IN ADDITION TO EX-GOVERNORS, MAJOR GENERALS AND ABOVE -- LAGOS 7255) INCLUDE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF ARMED FORCES MEDICAL SERVICES (AFMS) BRIG. A. O. AUSTEN-PETERS, AFMS DEPUTY DIRECTOR E. E. BASSEY-INYANG, ARMY CHIEF PAYMASTER COL. F. A. Z SHEILU, ARMY CHIEF IMAM LT. COL. ILIYASU KATSINA AND ARMY CHEIF ELECTRICAL AND MECHANICAL ENGINEER COL. K. C. LAWSON. ACCORDING NEW COMMISSIONER FOR DEFENSE, BRIG. ILIYA BISALIA, RETIREMENTS WILL CONTINUE. NEW LEADERS ARE APPARENTLY CONSIDERING HERETOFORE UNTHINKABLE DEMOBILIZATION OF AT LEAST SOME MILITARY UNITS. (COMMENT: DEMOBILIZATION ENITRELY DIFFERENT ORDER OF MAGNITUDE FROM RETIREMENT FEW HUNDRED CIVIL SERVANTS AND SENIOR OFFICERS AND PERHAPS TWO SHOULD NO BE LUMPED TOGETHER. IMPLICATIONS OF SUCH A MOVE FOR PEACE AND STABILITY OF NATION POTENTIALLY ENORMOUS. END COMMENT).

4. RETIREMENT NINE AMBASSADORS, INCLUDING PERMSEC JOE IYALLA AND AMBASSADOR TO US JOHN GARBA REPORTED (REFTEL B). MEA OFFICIALS EXPECT SHAKEUP WILL CONTINUE.

5. RETIREMENTS REACHED AVALANCHE PROPORTIONS AUGUST 20 WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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ANNOUNCEMENT DEPARTURE 94 SENIOR POLICE OFFICERS INCLUDING COMMISSIONERS JOSEPH ADEOLA (NORTH CERNTAL STATEL, ALHAJI BABA JIMETA (NORTH EASTERN STATE), HESTOR OMO-OBA (SOUTH EASTERN STATE) AND MRS. CLARA OGBEMUDIA, WIFE OF FORMER MID WEST GOVERNOR. LIST OF POLICE RETIREES FOLLOWS BY ARIGRAM.) THIS ON TOP OF REPORT 150 SENIOR POLICE OFFICERS REQUIRED SUBMIT DECLARATIONS OF ASSETS.

6. MOST PRESTIGIOUS RETIREE SO FAR CHIEF JUSTICE OF FEDERATION DR. TASLIM O. ELIAS. OTHER JUDGES RETIRED INCLUDE SUPREME COURT JUSTICE GEORGE B. A. COKER, PRESIDENT OF FEDERAL REVENUE COURT SIGISMUND O. LAMBO AND TWO JUDGES HIGH COURT OF LAGOS STATE. ELIAS' RETIREMENT OSTENSIBLY FOR REASONS OF HEALTH. FEDERAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL ISSUED STATEMENT AUGUST 20 PRAISING ELIAS FOR HIS CONTRIBUTIONS TO NATION AND PROFESSION OF JURISPRENDENCE. RUMORS ARE, HOWEVER, THAT ELIAS TAINED IN EYES OF NEW LEADERSHIP BECAUSE DURING TARKA AND GOMWALK CRISES HE ALLEGEDLY BENT LEGAL PRINCIPLES (RULES ON ADMISSIBILITY OF AFFIDAVITS) IN ORDER HELP GOWON REGIME OUT OF JAM.

7. CONSULAR SECTION LAGOS REPORTS CONSIDERABLE UNEASE AMONG YOUNG NIGERIAN PROFESSIONALS WHO DISMAYED OVER SPREADING OF FORCED RETIREMENTS INTO JUDICIARY. THEY EXPLORING REQUIREMENTS REVEAL OF VISAS, ADVANTAGES OF LEAVING COUNTRY FOR TIME BEING.

8. COMMENT: MANY OBSERVERS, INCLUDING BRITISH, ANXIOUS LEST PURGE GO TOO FAR, DEPRIVE NEW REGIME OF NEEDED EXPERTISE AND CREATE LARGE DISGRUNTLED GROUP OF EX-CIVIL SERVANTS AND POLICEMEN. NIGERIAN CADRE OF UPPER AND MIDDLE-LEVEL ADMINISTRATORS--FACED WITH IMPLEMENTING \$30-BILLION NAIRA DEVELOPMENT PLAN, UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION, SOLVING PORT CONGESTION, FUEL DISTRIBUTION AND SO FORTH -- WAS PRECARIOUSLY THIN EVEN BEFORE PURGE. POLICE HAVE HAD ROUGH GOING SINCE COUP, WHEN THEY WERE REPORTEDLY TOLD STAY OUT OF WAY AND KEEP QUIET. THEY NOW HOLD NO GOVERNORSHIPS AND ONLY TWO POSTS ON SMC. NOT LIKELY THOUGH THAT EX-POLICE OFFICERS WOULD BECOME NUCLEUS OF ANTI-REGIME ACTIVITY; SINCE THEY SEEM AWARE THEY ARE NO MATCH FOR ARMY. FURTHERMORE, SEVERAL NOTABLE POLICE OFFICERS, INCLUDING KAFARU TINUBU IN WESTERN STATE AND GABRIEL EZEKWEM IN EAST CENTRAL SEEM TO HAVE MADE TRANSITION TO NEW REGIME WITH GREATEST OF EASE. ALSO, CONSIDERING AMOUNT CONFIDENTIAL

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OF DEAD WOOD IN SENIOR POLICE RANKS, PURGE OF 94 OR MORE CAN BE REGARDED AS LONG OVERDUE.

9. RUMORS ALSO ON INCREASE THAT SOME FEDERAL PERMSECS WILL GET AXE-- NAMES MOST FREQUENTLY BEING MENTIONED ARE AYIDA, DAMCIDA AND ASIODU. IF SACKING SECRETARIES STATE MILITARY GOVERNMENTS BECOMES UNIVERSAL, IT WILL BE DIFFICULT FOR AYIDA HOLD ON AS SECRETARY FMG. END COMMENT.
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